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EDITORIAL COMMENT



WOMEN ON HOSPITAL BOARDS

WE had hoped that Mrs. Robb's Congress paper, given in the January number, would call forth comment from some of our readers on the subject of "Women on Hospital Boards."

We know this to be a subject upon which many of our prominent hospital workers have had experience, and upon which they are capable of expressing very decided opinions, but the fear of seeming discourteous to a body of people who are their superior officers undoubtedly holds many in silence, and we confess that it is with some trepidation that we touch upon the subject ourselves.

We do not believe that *sex* is a very great factor in hospital management. We think Miss Stevenson in her discussion touched the key-note of the situation when she says, "If a man or woman has the administrative power, and understands what good work is, then that man and that woman are the right persons to be put upon a board of managers."

Our ideal of a board of managers is one composed equally of men and women, each possessing the "administrative power," and, speaking from a varied experience, we would say, the smaller the board, the greater the force. Our first practical experience in a hospital under the control of a board of women managers was in the organization of a small institution of ten beds, with fifty women managers, not one of whom had ever seen the inside of a hospital before, and not one of whom but knew better than we how to run such a hospital. We remained there only fourteen months.

Our next venture was in a hospital of fifty beds, with a board of seventy-five women managers, and a board of trustees composed equally of men and women, who really held the balance of power.

In our last position, in a hospital of one hundred and twenty beds, with a board of twenty-four women managers, the administrative power was in the hands of a board of men trustees, in whose Executive Committee, composed of only five members, the actual executive power was vested.

This, we do not hesitate to say, was the best organization for practical results which we have known.

We have found the "administrative power," in a greater or less degree, in both men and women in all of these places, but we have realized that the great usefulness of these people has often been hampered by the association with them of a majority number of members appointed for reasons not in any way touching upon their personal qualifications for such service.

On such boards of management we often find people who are using "charities" as a social stepping-stone,—the newly-rich, who are anxious to spend their money in any way that shall win them public commendation, politicians, and people with social influence, who are looked upon as a necessary means of rousing public interest in an institution.

We recognize the necessity of interesting people representing every class of society in the welfare and support of an institution which is maintained for the

benefit of the general public, but we believe that the few people who are necessary to direct the administration of such institutions should be individuals, either men or women, who have demonstrated in some practical way that they possess the "administrative power," the judgment, honesty, and that great sense of justice necessary for the guidance and control of a public trust. Until this matter of selection is made with greater care universally there will be constant upheavals in the management of public institutions, and there will exist in those institutions that indescribable and indefinable condition which we call "antagonism" between the members of the board and the practical workers in the ranks.

MISS AMY HUGHES

MISS HUGHES's paper, given in the present number, is the first of a series of three on the subject of district nursing which were read at the "Congress," and which will be given in these pages in their order.

Miss Hughes's paper is doubly valuable, containing, as it does, an interesting description of the work actually being done to-day in England, and giving also a valuable bit of history, all the various and manifold branches of district work, as we know it, having come from the pioneer organization which she describes.

Miss Hughes is an Englishwoman of strong personality, and impresses one with her great reserve force. She is fine-looking, commanding in appearance, and possesses that rare tact and adaptability which comes only from a varied experience with the affairs of life. In all of the discussions in which she participated she commanded the closest attention and interest, and we heard frequently of her popularity and charm from a number of cities where she was a guest.

ARMY NURSE INSPECTION

MRS. DITA H. KINNEY, superintendent of the "Army Nurse Corps," left Washington early in November for a tour of inspection of the army hospitals of the West where trained nurses are stationed. On January 1 Mrs. Kinney sailed for the Philippines, where she will investigate the conditions of the nurses there, and will not be at her desk again in Washington until some time in April.

No subordinate government official is permitted to make statements directly to the public, so that we are not likely to know, at least for the present, the true inwardness of things as Mrs. Kinney finds them; we can only hope that her tour of inspection will result in improved conditions on many lines for the nurses in our army. The result of her efforts will be watched with great interest, not only by the nurses of this country, but by those of other countries. We shall give in an early number the "Nurse Corps Regulations," as issued by the "Medical Department" of the army, with which all nurses should be familiar.

TWO NEW ALUMNÆ JOURNALS.

Two charming and creditable additions to the little family of *alumnæ* journals are the *Paterson General Alumnæ Association Journal* and that of the Johns Hopkins *Alumnæ*. They are both on the same general plan, containing addresses from officers full of enthusiasm and ardent in urging fresh activity and enterprise in *alumnæ* affairs; reports showing flourishing conditions; short papers full of suggestive ideas; personal items; school and hospital news.

The Paterson General is an annual, the Johns Hopkins a quarterly. We would like to ask if the various *alumnæ* journals exchange with each other? If not, they are missing both profit and pleasure, and we advise a complete system of exchanges between these publications, of which we hope to keep an exact record, both of this country and abroad.

The friendly emulation thus produced would be wholesome, and the knowledge of one another's doings and aims would bring a fresh and enlarged set of interests to the often "shut in" nurse.

From these journals we see that the Paterson General nurses are interested in the Consumer's League and are trying to do something towards furthering this movement; also that they are taking up the "trained attendant" question for consideration,—no doubt to be followed by action.

The Johns Hopkins *Alumnæ* are offering their services to the Board of Health of Baltimore as assistants in the "war" against tuberculosis; they are also establishing a reference library for the Club-House which is designed to be a good and comprehensive collection of books useful to nurses, not only on professional subjects but upon allied lines of study.

NEW YORK STATE NURSES' ASSOCIATION

THE meeting of the State nurses, held in New York on January 30-31, will have become ancient history to many before we go to press for our next number.

We hope, however, to be able to report that the membership standards have been fixed upon lines having for their first consideration the advancement of the profession as a whole. The questions at issue are of such vital importance, and there are such varied opinions in regard to them, that no one woman, or no one body of nurses, has been ready to stand forth boldly and define the conditions which, while necessary for professional progress, seem at the same time harsh towards the individual. We believe that broad professional lines only can lead to success.

THE COURSE IN HOSPITAL ECONOMICS

WE call the attention of our readers to the report on the course in hospital economics, given in this issue, which contains much valuable information to those who are interested in the development of the course.

The members of these first two classes will always carry the honor of having been the pioneer students in the course, although they were to some extent the victims of some of its necessary crudities. We have a letter before us from the chairman in which she says that the criticisms of the students of last year have been exceedingly helpful in improving the course this year. A spirit of cordial coöperation on the part of both officers and pupils, all working together for the best interests of the course, is the only way in which rapid advancement can be made. But the officers must remember that these pupils are not probationers, and the students must bear in mind that every new step that is taken in the uplifting of our profession must pass through its experimental stage.

It would be interesting and helpful at this point if the graduates would explain through our pages the extent to which the course is of especial value in the various positions which they now occupy.

SHALL PUPILS IN TRAINING BE REQUIRED TO USE THE MALE CATHETER?

THERE will be found in "Letters to the Editor" a communication from Miss Schultze which brings up the question of teaching pupils in training the use of the male catheter. Without entering into any discussion of the merits or demerits of the case in point, we wish to be clearly understood as being opposed on general principles to compelling young nurses in training to perform all offices for men. What a woman may do after she has finished her training in her private practice is entirely her own personal affair,—she makes her own terms, and is free to leave her patient at any moment,—but we contend that there is a limit to the kind of service which a young, inexperienced woman shall be forced to perform for male patients in a public hospital, while she is in a position which denies her the privilege of refusing to perform such service on the penalty of immediate dismissal. If on leaving the school, with all the variety of experience and manual dexterity which she has acquired, it becomes necessary in a private case for her to use the male catheter, the necessary instruction can be given her in a moment by the physician in attendance. The idea of requiring such service from the young women in the wards of a large general hospital is to us exceedingly repellant, and we have never found it necessary to require it.

NURSES WHO SOLICIT

WE have now in a number of cities nurses who are for the time being regularly appointed to introduce the JOURNAL to their associates and solicit subscribers. These women are all supposed to be members of some one of the organizations for which the JOURNAL stands and to be interested in its professional success. A number of nurses who are doing this work have shown great zeal, and their success has been surprising, while others in a better field have not done nearly so well. In a number of instances the work is being done by women incapacitated from doing regular nursing, who have been benefited by the light occupation and out-of-door life, while the revenue, although moderate, has aided in their support during a period of otherwise enforced idleness. The commission for new names is the same as that allowed on all two-dollar journals, with one half the amount for renewals. It is the privilege of an old subscriber to send her renewal through the solicitor, but it is not the right of the solicitor to *demand* that she shall do so. We would caution all nurses to assure themselves that the solicitor is properly authorized to represent us before intrusting her with their money.

